



News Release

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Utah High School Student Experimentation with Tobacco at an All-Time Low *Annual Report Shows Utah's Anti-Tobacco Effort is Successful among Adults and Pregnant Women Too*

SALT LAKE CITY – The percentage of high school students reporting they had tried cigarettes reached a historic low in 2005. Only 25 percent of Utah's teens have experimented with smoking, compared to nearly 50 percent in 1991. The Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) 2006 Utah Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) Annual Report published today, also shows the youth smoking rate has decreased 38 percent since 1999 and continues to be the lowest in the country.

"Utah's efforts are successfully reducing tobacco use among Utah's teens through local school and community-based prevention programs, a high profile marketing campaign, and efforts to enhance tobacco policies to help youth stay tobacco free," says Heather Borski, TPCP manager at the UDOH. "Local health departments and law enforcement have done a tremendous job of reducing youth's access to tobacco through retailer education and compliance checks as well."

Recall of The TRUTH anti-tobacco ads was exceptionally high, with 98 percent of youth ages 13 through 17 reporting they had seen or heard the ads in the past month. A recent national study of state-funded anti-tobacco media campaigns found Utah's The TRUTH campaign reached youth more frequently than any other campaign in the study. Borski said ongoing exposure to The TRUTH messages is crucial for ensuring that youth smoking rates don't rebound.

The annual report highlights the accomplishments of the UDOH's TPCP and its many partners. Utah's efforts include a variety of school and community-based initiatives made by local health departments and other community partners including the media, business and non-profit organizations. The statewide program, funded through Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) and Cigarette Tax Restricted Accounts, also produced significant results in reducing adult smoking, adult and child exposure to secondhand smoke and smoking among pregnant women.

The report shows that adult smoking has decreased 17 percent since 1999; twice the average US decline. In 2005, 80 percent of Utah adult smokers reported they wanted to quit and 60 percent tried to quit for at

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least one day. The demand for quit services remains high. During the 2006 fiscal year more than 12,000 Utahns enrolled in UDOH-sponsored free or low-cost tobacco cessation services. This is due in part to the high visibility of adult The TRUTH campaign messages that encourage quit attempts and inform about quit services. The annual report shows 97 percent of adult smokers reported seeing campaign ads in the past month. Eighty-nine percent were aware of the Utah Tobacco Quit Line and 69 percent reported knowing about Utah's online quit service, Utah QuitNet.

Fewer pregnant women are smoking as well, with a 23 percent drop between 1999 and 2004. The likelihood of smoking during pregnancy varies by age and education. Pregnant teens and women with a high school education or less continue to report smoking rates of 10 percent or higher.

The campaign to reduce non-smoker's exposure to secondhand smoke has been particularly successful. Children's exposure to secondhand smoke in homes has fallen by 53 percent since 2001 and more Utahns have adopted household rules barring smoking in homes. Since 2005 more than 2,500 additional multi-housing units became smoke free, and since 2003 fewer Utahns report worksite exposure to secondhand smoke. It is anticipated that even fewer people will be exposed to secondhand smoke as amendments to the 2006 Utah Indoor Clean Air Act eventually phase out smoking in taverns, private clubs and other previously exempt venues.

"We are very encouraged by the latest survey results of smoking behavior in Utah," Borski added, "but we can't sit back and think the work is done. The tobacco industry spends over \$60 million each year to market and advertise its dangerous tobacco products in Utah. A long-term commitment to tobacco control is crucial to continue to save lives and reduce smoking-related costs."

Borski cited additional public health challenges in the tobacco prevention and control arena:

- Tobacco use remains almost as high as national figures in Utah's low income and less educated populations and in some racial and ethnic minority groups.
- More than 200,000 Utahns continue to use tobacco.
- Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., and more than 1,100 Utahns die annually as a result of their own smoking.
- Every year Utah incurs more than \$530 million in smoking-related medical and productivity costs.

The annual report can be found online at www.tobaccofreeutah.org.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.